

# Shaykh Abu'l Hudā Muḥammad al-Yáqūbī on Imām Ahmēd Ridā Khān

Transcript of a section from the interview on Takbeer TV<sup>1</sup>

...great Ḥanbali scholars or great Sufi masters, great men of Allāh. Imām Ahmēd ibn Ḥanbal himself believed in seeking the *barakah*<sup>2</sup> of RasūlAllāh *ṣallAllāhu ʿalayhi wa ʿalihī wa sallam*, in visiting the grave of RasūlAllāh *ṣallAllāhu ʿalayhi wa ʿalihī wa sallam*, believed in the weak ḥadīth being valid proofs in the field of *shariāh* and in the narration of the *mújizāt* and the *fādayil*,<sup>3</sup> unlike modern Hanbalites. Even back to 50 years ago...70 years ago, the greatest Hanbalite scholars in Syria were great sufis. Many of them were Shādhilīs, for example.

So followers - true followers - of these four madh'hab<sup>s</sup>,<sup>4</sup> the majority of the *ummah*, I would say, to add to this - here you could filter who is a Ḥanafī, who is a Ḥanbalī - they should be at the same time, followers of Imām Abu'l Ḥasan al-Ashārī and the followers of Imām Abū Mansūr al-Māturīdī in their explanation of *aqīdah*.<sup>5</sup>

Now, we follow RasūlAllāh *ṣallAllāhu ʿalayhi wa ʿalihī wa sallam* in everything. In our *fiqh*,<sup>6</sup> in our *aqīdah*, we follow RasūlAllāh *ṣallAllāhu ʿalayhi wa ʿalihī wa sallam*. But, in *fiqh*, we follow his way of *ibādah*<sup>7</sup> as presented to us and as interpreted to us, by these imāms; in *aqīdah*, we follow the *aqīdah* of RasūlAllāh *ṣallAllāhu ʿalayhi wa ʿalihī wa sallam* but, as presented to us, explained to us, by Imām Abu'l Ḥasan al-Ashārī and Imām Abū Mansūr al-Māturīdī. Both of them came in a dark time, when Ahlu's Sunnah were oppressed, and they advocated the doctrine of Ahlu's Sunnah wa'l Jamā'ah.

I would say, for example, in the Indian sub-continent,<sup>8</sup> if you love Imām Ahmēd Ridā Khān, you are from Ahlu's Sunnah wa'l Jamā'ah; I would say, for example, in the Middle-East and North Africa, if you love Shaykh Yūsuf an-Nab'hānī, you are from Ahlu's Sunnah wa'l Jamā'ah. If you are against Al-Imām al-Shaykh Yūsuf an-Nab'hānī, you are against Ahlu's Sunnah wa'l Jamā'ah. [...] you are familiar with Al-Imām Shaykh Yūsuf an-Nab'hānī. He was the best lover of RasūlAllāh *ṣallAllāhu ʿalayhi wa ʿalihī wa sallam* who authored dozens of books in praise of RasūlAllāh *ṣallAllāhu ʿalayhi wa ʿalihī wa sallam*; in prayers of RasūlAllāh *ṣallAllāhu ʿalayhi wa ʿalihī wa sallam*; in description of RasūlAllāh *ṣallAllāhu ʿalayhi wa ʿalihī wa sallam* and on, and on, and on...

So these people can distinguish; by following them, we know who we are, and by attacking them or criticizing them, we know who the other parties are. That is probably in a nutshell, defined for our modern viewers. If we go back in history, for example, anyone who criticizes Imām Ghazzālī, puts a question mark in front of him, he doesn't belong to Ahlu's Sunnah.

**Interviewer: Any scholarly personality from the indo-pak subcontinent that you personally have been inspired by, or you studied, or you...?**

Well, definitely. The Muslim ummah is one body. And the scholars from the east and the west of Ahlu's Sunnah belong to one tree. Now, it has many branches, and we are connected to each other, exactly like tissues belonging to one body.

<sup>1</sup> This being an informal talk, and not a prepared speech, there are unfinished sentences and sometimes, the shaykh changes the tense mid-sentence or breaks away to say something else. The entire talk is transcribed faithfully here, except in a few places where a preposition or a pronoun has been modified to correct the sentence. This clip was available on Youtube and other video sites made available by sunnitalk.co.uk

<sup>2</sup> munificence, grace.

<sup>3</sup> on miracles, and virtues or superiority of certain people, places or things.

<sup>4</sup> schools

<sup>5</sup> creed, doctrine.

<sup>6</sup> jurisprudence – the Islamic law of permissible and forbidden.

<sup>7</sup> worship

<sup>8</sup> the Shaykh says "Sub-Indian continent," which has been changed appropriately.

In the Indian sub-continent, I believe, the most famous of all scholars in modern times, is the great Imām, Aḥmed Ridā Khān of Bareilly; who was, I would consider the *mujaddid*<sup>9</sup> of Islam in the Indian sub-continent. Now, to your surprise, I heard of Imām Aḥmed Ridā Khān from when I was a little boy in Damascus.

**Interviewer: That was actually one of the questions: Is Shaykh Ahmed Ridā linked to any of your teachers or your scholars?**

Definitely. I read about Imām Aḥmed Ridā Khān in the famous work of Sayyid Ábdu'l Ḥayy al-Kattānī, *Fahrīs al-Fahāris*. Because, Sayyid Ábdu'l Ḥayy al-Kattānī took *ijāzah*<sup>10</sup> from Imām Aḥmed Ridā Khān. Also, some years ago, I believe, approximately ten years ago, I read in the *Riħlah*<sup>11</sup> of As-Sayyid Muḥammad az-Zamzamī al-Kattānī; I got a copy of it...a manuscript in 1997, and then it was published - or parts of it were published in *Dirāsāt al-Islāmiyyah* magazine in Pakistan. And he mentions the encounters between his father, the great muhaddith of *Al-Maghrib*,<sup>12</sup> As-Sayyid Muḥammad ibn Jāfar al-Kattānī; the father of my teacher [and] my father's teacher, As-Sayyid Muḥammad al-Makkī al-Kattānī.<sup>13</sup>

The encounters between Sayyid Muḥammad ibn Jāfar al-Kattānī and Sayyid<sup>14</sup> Aḥmed Ridā Khān of Bareilly, in Al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah. And he refers to his book *Ad-Dawlāh al-Makkiyyah*, on the knowledge of RasūlAllāh *sallAllāhu álayhi wa sallātū wa salām*, how vast it is and how he was given the knowledge of everything. As I said, Sayyid Muḥammad ibn Jāfar al-Kattānī wrote a book on the same subject in three volumes *Jilā'a*<sup>15</sup> *al-Qulubi mina'l Aṣdā'-yí'l Ghaybiyyah bi Iḥāṭatihī* *álayhi's salātu wa's salām mina'l Úlūm'i'l Kawniyyah*. A three volume work which was published recently in Egypt.

So my first encounters with Sayyid Aḥmed Ridā Khān were in my father's library. Because he had a small work, very tiny but of great significance called *Al-Mujmal al-Muáddid fī Ta'ālīf al-Mujaddid*.<sup>16</sup> It was an index of the books which Imām Aḥmed Ridā Khān *rāhīmahullāhū tāālā wa rādiya ánhū* authored and published during his lifetime in India, in the Indian writing style - lithography - and it has sections on his books, in Arabic, in Urdu, in Persian, and books on Tafsir, books on Úlūm al-Qur'ān, Úlūm al-Fiqh, Úlūm al-Ḥadīth and so on.

So these are the early encounters with Shaykh Aḥmed Ridā Khān *rāhīmahullāhū tāālā wa rādiya ánhū*. And then later on, I learned more and more about his works. The first book I got of his is, *Ad-Dawlāh al-Makkiyyah bi'l Māddati'l Ghaybiyyah*. And I read it twice; and benefitted from it a lot and enjoyed reading it and one of the best works on this subject. I referred now to the book of As-Sayyid Muḥammad ibn Jāfar al-Kattānī , it is a vast work, very elaborate work, and adds also a lot of information on the same subject.

I read several of his<sup>17</sup> works later on and was very deeply affected by reading his book which was translated into the English language. I was given actually, six months ago, as a gift; one of the brothers gave me the first volume of *Al-Malfuzat*<sup>18</sup> in English.

And I was reading it in Birmingham while I was a guest of the Muslim community there; and this is like, before *fajr*<sup>19</sup> time and I was in the state of rapture reading his fatwas, reading his comments on the Awliyā ... reading his ... I was in rapture, I went into the state of *takbir*, Allāhu Akbar, Allāhu Akbar, Allāhu Akbar,

<sup>9</sup> Mujaddid: reviver of religion, renewer of faith. A scholar who revitalizes the community.

<sup>10</sup> *Ijāzah*: authorization to narrate.

<sup>11</sup> Travelogue

<sup>12</sup> Morocco

<sup>13</sup> That is, Shaykh Muḥammad al-Makki al-Kattānī is the son of Shaykh Muḥammad Jāfar al-Kattānī; and that Shaykh Muḥammad al-Makki al-Kattānī is the teacher of Shaykh Abū'l Hudā al-Yaqūbī and his father, Shaykh Ibrahīm al-Yaqūbī.

<sup>14</sup> Surely, the Shaykh doesn't mean 'sayyid' as in descendant of the Prophet *sallAllāhu álayhi wa sallātū wa salām*. Rather 'sayyid' as a respectful term, meaning 'master' or simply a slip of the tongue as he is naming so many sayyids.

<sup>15</sup> The print edition of the book says *Jalā'a al-Qulūb* on the title page.

<sup>16</sup> This was compiled by Alahazrat's student, Mawlānā Žafaruddin al-Bihārī.

<sup>17</sup> The shaykh is talking about Imām Aḥmed Ridā Khān.

<sup>18</sup> *Al-Malfūzāt* is a collection of sayings by Imām Aḥmed Ridā Khān, compiled by his younger son, Mawlana Muṣṭafā Ridā Khān.

<sup>19</sup> dawn

for having such a scholar; defending, advocating the doctrine of Ahlu's Sunnah wa'l Jama'ah so strongly, having this deep love of the Awliyā, and the Úlāma...

I feel *wallāhi*,<sup>20</sup> to be honest, I feel like...the... Imām Aḥmed Riḍā Khān and our great shaykhs and their shaykhs in Damascus have drunk from the same river; from the same cup, even. This is what we were taught about... about the *nūr* of RasūlAllāh *sallAllāhu ʿalayhi wa ʿalihī wa sallam*, about our connection and imagining, visualizing, our presence in front of RasūlAllāh *sallAllāhu ʿalayhi wa ʿalihī wa sallam*, about being firm [on] who is Ahlu's Sunnah and who is a deviator and about many issues.

And [we] find Imām Aḥmed Riḍā Khān at that early time really predicted a lot of what is going on now. And wanted to put an end.. he even spoke about, for example, multi-faith dialogue - in [that] *Al-Malfuzat*. I was very happy to read this; as early as that time, writing and warning of it; warning of it, how it is going on now. Because multifaith dialogue for us is *dáwah* – is a way of *dáwah*.<sup>21</sup> Presenting Islam or showing people the true way of Islam, the true nature of Islam. Rather than making concessions about our deen, as people are doing now.

So, I went to bed after *duḥā* time, after sunrise...sometime; and I saw, Imām Aḥmed Riḍā Khān in my dream. And this was like the peak; I was in rapture, in joy - and I said *subḥānAllāh*.<sup>22</sup> It has happened to me several times, I read about scholars, or I read their books, or make mention of them, or I narrate their *isnāds*<sup>23</sup> and then I see them in my dreams. And about Imām Aḥmed Riḍā Khān, it was like the top of joy... seeing him.

And I believe, Muslims in the Indian sub-continent were given this great bounty from Allāh *subḥānahu wa tāilā* by having this scholar, who was a great scholar of fiqh, great scholar of hadith, a great scholar of the Arabic language, and a great poet himself. I think he mastered every discipline<sup>24</sup> and his books show the level of his knowledge.

**Interviewer: I would add to it, a great faqih. If you see the great works, that the shaykh has compiled in the subject of fiqh, it is amazing. You think yourself that...SubḥānAllāh?**

Exactly. One of his teachers, and very famous in the *isnāds* of the people of *shām*<sup>25</sup> is Mawlānā Faḍlu'r Raḥmān ibn Ahlullāh al-Kunjurābādī<sup>26</sup> who died in the year 1314.<sup>27</sup> It is told that Imām Aḥmed Riḍā Khān met him and took his *ijāzah*, and Mawlānā Faḍlu'r Raḥmān took his turban and put it on the head of Mawlānā Aḥmed Riḍā Khān. Mawlānā Faḍlu'r Raḥmān is the teacher of the teacher of our teachers.

**Interviewer: So there is that very tight link between scholars...**

Ahlu's Sunnah are one body, wherever you go.

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<sup>20</sup> by Allāh

<sup>21</sup> Inviting others to Islām.

<sup>22</sup> Glory to Allah

<sup>23</sup> Chain of Narration or Chain of Authorization, particularly

<sup>24</sup> The shaykh means to say, disciplines of Islamic Sciences.

<sup>25</sup> Shām: Levantine. Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine.

<sup>26</sup> Ganj Murādābādī. But due to the absence of the guttural 'g' in Arabic, it is replaced with 'k'.

<sup>27</sup> By other accounts, he passed away in 1313 AH.

